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369 In the cities, meals are served in the dining room or, more rarely, in the kitchen. In rural areas, the rooms of the houses are used for this purpose only on special occasions, such as Christmas or a wedding; otherwise, meals are eaten on the porch or in the yard. In the cities the three main meals are at 7:00 A.M., 2:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M., the afternoon meal being the most important. Farmers eat, depending upon the season, three or more times, at 5:00 A.M., 12:00 noon and 7:00 P.M. Their main meal is taken in the evening.

[788] Among the numerous ancient customs connected with meal time, some still appear to be generally alive: the grace before and after the meal, the cutting of the homemade loaf of bread by the master of [562] the house, the silence observed around the table. In the Paloc region even today only the men sit at the table, while the women eat standing, unless they are nursing an infant.

● 146 Nutritional status. As for the nutritional status of the Magyar peasants, very little precise data are available, and there are practically none on food consumption. Relying on reports from refugees and evaluating articles published by the Hungarian daily press, one could roughly estimate the nutritional status of the

peasants as varying between poor and fair, according to Magyar standards, from region to region, and poor compared to an American farmer's standards. However, the Magyar peasants are still better nourished than their fellow countrymen living in the cities, exclusive of the aristocrats of the Communist bureaucracy. A definite lack in their diet, however, is that of milk (even in the case of children), green vegetables and fruits. This is due partly to financial reasons, partly to dietary habits.

146 [369]

Public health regulation. Hungary was one of the first states in Europe to provide its people with modern public health legislation. Law No. 16 of 1876 entrusted the local administration in the megye with the job of decreasing the death rate and the regulation of hygienic conditions. This same law provided for reclaiming of swamp lands, regulated hygienic conditions and first aid provisions in the work shops, established ambulance centers, and set the standards for midwives. Rural hygiene was greatly improved in 1927 when the Royal Hungarian National Institute for Public Health was founded, chiefly from a grant of the Rockefeller Foundation. 744

In the pre-war years, two organizations, both under government

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reduce the volume of grain surpluses in comparison with the quantities available prior to the war, but, on the other hand, to favour the raising of livestock. The Plan, on its agricultural side, was designed to support this tendency.

However, the objectives of agricultural policy go far beyond this development programme. The Government are determined to reorganize production in conformity with the Soviet *kolkhoz* pattern, that is to create large units by merging the peasant holdings into collective farms. Results of the efforts made in this direction have hitherto been slight. The peasants did not yield to propaganda or to indirect coercion. Presumably the pressure will grow. The opinion evidently held in official quarters is that it is through the *kolkhoz* that substantial improvements in the methods of agricultural production are to be hoped for. A reorganization on these lines would at the same time offer the authorities an instrument for tighter control of agriculture. Big units under central command could also serve as a lever for directing the agricultural labour reserve. This direction appears to be a point of paramount importance. Industrialization, as foreseen by the Five-year Plan, implies a heavy drain on the rural man-power reserve; it is bound, in a not too distant future, to involve the imposition of labour-saving working methods in agriculture to release labour.

It is a matter of speculation how the peasant population would react in case of coercive measures for establishing the *kolkhoz*. Under the conditions prevailing it would be very difficult and dangerous to attempt sabotage. Nevertheless if the measures were pressed home ruthlessly, resistance on the part of the peasants might cause a setback in agricultural production.

No signs of this turn of events are, so far, discernible. Hitherto the approach to land collectivization has been cautious. If a clash can be avoided, one has to assume that the agricultural programme will work and will yield certain results. The recovery in livestock, not yet complete, then will go on. In addition, there is plenty of room for improvement even in the elementary processes of agriculture; the effects of these improvements on yields may for a while easily outstrip the increase in domestic requirements caused by the growth of population. Yet there is another point possibly impairing export capacity in food: higher food consumption induced by improved nutritional standards resulting from the redistribution of incomes. However, the first wave of additional requirements can be supposed to have been satisfied. It can equally be supposed that this improvement was reflected in the export surpluses in recent years. Nutritional standards were the worst among agricultural

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146 439 labourers. A substantial number of them having been promoted to be smallholders, they were, of course, anxious to improve their diet as soon as the opportunity was given them. As to the urban population its food supplies were on the whole satisfactory during the closing Plan period. It seems probable that a further improvement of real incomes would rather induce a shift towards higher-quality food than an overall increase of food consumption. This consideration suggests that an agricultural surplus, similar in order of magnitude to that in 1949, might be available, necessarily subject from year to year to the fluctuations of crops.

439 433 It is only for a small fraction of the food surplus, which may be estimated on an average at some 100 million U.S. dollars, that the Russian orbit offers a market. Soviet Russia is a buyer of certain quantities of pigs and of some special products like quality seeds. Czechoslovakia offers a market for meat, fats, and feeding stuffs. But the bulk of the agricultural surplus has to be sold in the West. Despite an extremely poor harvest in 1947–8, 24 per cent of total exports were shipped to Western continental countries, and another 17 per cent to Great Britain. These deliveries consisted mainly of food and other agricultural produce. Since imports of Western Europe, in the main groups of food products and fodder from overseas, were round 5,000 million dollars (at 1948 prices) in 1948 as well as in 1949,[1] Hungary's surplus might be easily spread over the area, even if one or the other of the countries concerned, for political reasons, did not favour imports from Hungary.[2] It appears on the other hand most essential for Hungary to dispose of her agricultural surplus. In spite of the growing importance of raw-material supplies from Russia, certain industries like rubber are entirely, cotton mills and other branches of manufactures partly, dependent on supplies from outside the Russian orbit, and must be paid for by exports which earn sterling or dollars, all the more so since the breach with Yugoslavia, which was one of the suppliers of copper and tin. Another point of importance, in view of the vast capital programme in progress, is that proceeds of agricultural exports can partly be used for purchases of equipment in the West.

Notwithstanding the diminishing relative importance of agricultural exports, there are strong grounds for holding that Hungary is still dependent on Western markets. Difficulties of

[1] U.N., Economic Commission for Europe, *Economic Survey of Europe in 1948, 1949* (Geneva, 1949, 1950).

[2] The imports of Western Europe from Eastern European countries in the commodity groups in question amounted, according to the E.C.E. *Survey*, to 603 million dollars in 1938 and to 219 million in 1949.